Hazlewood-inspired Australia beat India in second T20 in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: A Josh Hazlewood masterclass with the ball and a batting blitz by Mitchell Marsh carried Australia to a dominant four-wicket win in the second T20 International against India here at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on Friday.

Fast bowler Hazlewood took 3-13 and racked up 15 dot balls in a devastating opening spell as Australia bowled out India for 125 in front of a crowd of 82,438 at the sporting colosseum.

Captain Marsh smashed 46 off 26 balls and shared in a 51-run opening partnership with Travis Head before the hosts reeled in the modest total with 40 balls to spare.

With the series-opener in Canberra washed out by rain on Wednesday, Australia will take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series into the third game in Hobart on Sunday.

India opener Abhishek Sharma top-scored with 68 off 37 balls, further enhancing his burgeoning reputation with a fine first fifty on Australian soil.

However, he was one of only two India batters to reach double figures on a lively pitch that offered pace and movement off the seam.

With Marsh winning the toss and electing to field, Hazlewood had Shubman Gill given out lbw on the first ball.

While the decision was overturned on review, Hazlewood followed up with a short ball that crashed into the crest of Gill's helmet.

A shook-up Gill slogged Hazlewood to be caught for five, triggering a top order collapse.

Hazlewood removed Suryakumar Yadav for one, the skipper's fourth single-digit score in six matches, before dismissing Tilak Varma for a duck two balls later with a top-edge caught by wicket-keeper Inglis.

By the end of Hazlewood's four-over spell, India were in huge trouble at 32 for four.

"The ball feels like it's coming out really nicely at the moment in whatever format I'm turning up and playing," said man-of-the-match Hazlewood.

"It was just put the ball in the right areas, don't try too much and see what happens."

Sharma made a bright start amid the Hazlewood onslaught, smashing 14 runs off paceman Xavier Bartlett (2-39) in the first over he faced.

He and Harshit Rana (35) combined in a 56-run stand for the sixth wicket to save India from embarrassment.

But Bartlett recovered well from his bruising early spell, dismissing Rana and Shivam Dube (4) in quick succession, the latter brilliantly pouched by a diving Inglis.

Another sharp catch in close by Sean Abbott saw Kuldeep Yadav depart for nought before Nathan Ellis (2-21) dismissed Abhishek lbw, ending India's hopes of a decent total.—Reuters

Scoreboard

INDIA:		AUSTRALIA:	
S. Gill c Marsh b Hazlewood	5	M. Marsh c Sharma b K. Yadav	46
A. Sharma lbw b Ellis	68	T. Head c Varma b Varun	28
S. Samson lbw b Ellis	2	J. Inglis lbw b K. Yadav	20
S. Yadav c Inglis b Hazlewood	1	T. David c&b Varun	1
T. Varma c Inglis b Hazlewood	0	M. Owen c Samson b Bumrah	14
A. Patel run out	7	M. Stoinis not out	6
H. Rana c David b Bartlett	35	M. Short b Bumrah	0
S. Dube c Inglis b Bartlett	4	X. Bartlett not out	0
K. Yadav c (sub) b Stoinis	0	**EXTRAS** (B-4, LB-1, NB-1, W-5)	11
V. Chakravarthy not out	0	**TOTAL** (for six wickets, 13.2 overs)	126
J. Bumrah run out	0	**DID NOT BAT:** N. Ellis, M. Kuhnemann, J. Hazlewood	
EXTRAS (B-1, W-2)	3	**FALL OF WICKETS:** 1-51 (Head), 2-87 (Marsh), 3-90 (David), 4-112 (Inglis), 5-124 (Owen), 6-124 (Short)	
TOTAL (all out, 18.4 overs)	125	**BOWLING:** Bumrah 4-0-26-2 (1w), Rana 2-0-27-0 (1nb), Varun 4-0-23-2, K. Yadav 3.2-0-45-2	
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-20 (Gill), 2-23 (Samson), 3-32 (S. Yadav), 4-32 (Varma), 5-49 (Patel), 6-105 (Rana), 7-109 (Dube), 8-110 (K. Yadav), 9-125 (Sharma)		**RESULT:** Australia won by four wickets.	
BOWLING: Hazlewood 4-0-13-3, Bartlett 4-0-39-2, Ellis 3.4-0-21-2, Stoinis 4-0-24-1 (1w), Owen 1-0-13-0 (1w), Kuhnemann 2-0-14-0		**PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH:** Josh Hazlewood	

AUSTRALIAN captain Mitch Marsh hits a six during the second T20 International against India at the MCG on Friday.—AFP

Henry ruled out of final England ODI

WELLINGTON: New Zealand paceman Matt Henry has been ruled out of Sunday's final One-day International against England because of a calf strain and Kristian Clarke has been called into the squad to replace him, the team said on Friday.

The Blacks Caps sealed series honours on Wednesday when Blair Tickner, who was a late replacement for Henry in the team, took 4-34 in a five-wicket win over the tourists in Hamilton.

Tickner had come into the squad last Sunday as a replacement for Kyle Jamieson, who was ruled out due to stiffness in his side, and would expect to play again in the series finale in Wellington.

Uncapped fast bowler Clarke is a former under-19 and New Zealand 'A' representative who scored 100 not out and took 3-57 for Northern Districts in the domestic Ford Trophy ODI competition on Thursday.—Reuters

SOUTH AFRICAN batter Reeza Hendricks is clean bowled by Pakistan pacer Salman Mirza during the second T20 International at the Gaddafi Stadium on Friday.—M.Arif/White Star

Pacers, Saim star as Pakistan thrash SA to level T20 series

By Mohammad Yaqoob

LAHORE: Opener Saim Ayub hit a blistering half century after pacers starred as Pakistan thrashed South Africa by nine wickets in the second Twenty20 International of the three-match series to level it 1-1.

Saim smashed an unbeaten 71 off 38, hitting six fours and five sixes, to help Pakistan chase down the paltry 111-run target in the 14th over.

Earlier, Faheem Ashraf and Salman Mirza kept South Africa quiet with a brilliant pace bowling show.

Pakistan openers Sahibzada Farhan and Saim had seen the side cruise to 49-0 by the end of the powerplay with a measured approach with no pressure on them whatsoever.

But right at the end of the period, Corbin Bosch trapped Sahibzada lbw with his pace. However, the incoming Babar Azam triggered raucous roars among the capacity crowds, getting off the mark with a scintillating cover drive.

Saim too carried on, launching Ottneil Baartman for a huge six over long-on as Pakistan edged closer to the small target.

The southpaw followed that up with a powerful cut through the off-side for four and an audacious flick for yet another maximum, milking a 21 runs from the ninth over.

Saim brought up his first T20I half century on home soil in 29 balls in the next over — which also saw him lift spinner Donovan Ferreira over the covers for six — as Pakistan posted 92-1 at halfway stage.

After Babar became highest T20I-run scorer — beating India's Rohit Sharma with 4323 tuns in 123 matches — Saim dispatched George Linde and Ferreira for sixes to take Pakistan over the line.

Earlier, Pakistan put up a fast-bowling masterclass as South Africa were bundled out cheaply after they were put into bat.

Faheem took 4-23 while Salman — replacing Shaheen Shah Afridi in the Pakistan XI — returned figures of 3-14 and Naseem Shah chipped in with 2-28.

South Africa's best batting display came from Dewald Brevis, but the right-hander's burst was too short to lead the visitors to a competitive total.

They reeled at 31-4 by the end of the powerplay as Salman rattled their top-order with immaculate line and length and subtle movement.

The left-armer struck as early as on the second ball of the match, bamboozling South African opener Reeza Hendricks — who hit a match-winning half century in the first match — with an in-swinger that crashed into the stumps.

Naseem pushed the Proteas deeper into trouble, deceiving Quinton de Kock with a slower one, which the right-hander holed to Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha at mid-off.

Salman then returned to get Tony de Zorzi caught at deep fine before castling Matthew Breetzke with a stunning off-cutter.

The incoming Brevis, one of the most promising prospects in global T20 cricket, went after the Pakistan bowlers to bring back South Africa in the game, dispatching spinners Mohammad Nawaz and Abrar Ahmed and medium-pacer Faheem for handsome sixes, but was undone by a shorter ball by Faheem to depart with 25 off 16 against his name.

Faheem then returned to make South African captain Ferreira drag the ball on to his stumps just at the halfway stage, to leave the visitors at 66-6.

The right-armer returned to send back Linde in the same manner two overs later.

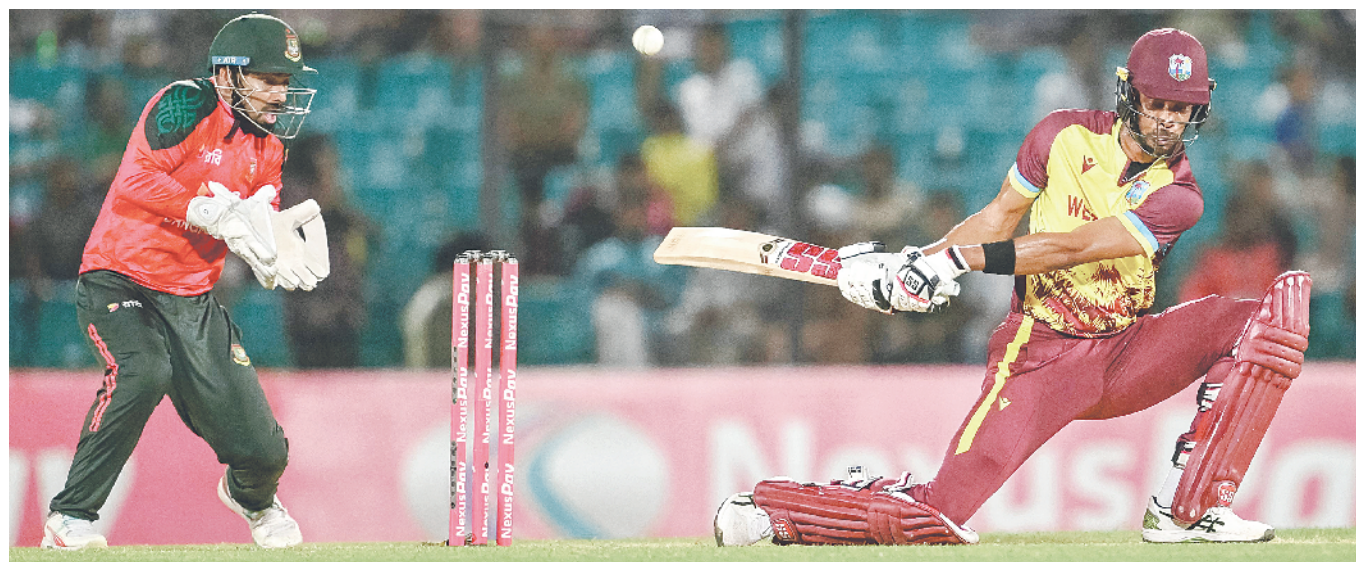
South Africa's struggles only kept on increasing, with Naseem producing a caught-behind dismissal of Bosch in the 14th over.

Abrar Ahmed got himself in the wickets column, thanks to a carrom ball that clipped Nandre Burger's off-stump before Faheem came back to be gifted a fourth and South Africa's last wicket on the second ball of the 20th over.

Pakistan will look to win the series when they take on South Africa in the third and final match at the same venue on Saturday.

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA:	
R. Hendricks b Salman Mirza	0
Q. de Kock c Agha Salman b Naseem	7
T. de Zorzi c Abrar b Salman Mirza	7
D. Brevis c Nawaz b Faheem	25
M. Breetzke b Salman Mirza	5
D. Ferreira b Faheem	15
G. Linde b Faheem	9
C. Bosch c Usman b Naseem	11
N. Burger b Abrar	9
O. Baartman b Faheem	12
L. Ngidi not out	7
EXTRAS (NB-1, W-2)	3
TOTAL (all out, 19.2 overs)	110
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0 (Hendricks), 2-12 (de Kock), 3-15 (de Zorzi), 4-23 (Breetzke), 5-49 (Brevis), 6-66 (Ferreira), 7-73 (Linde), 8-83 (Bosch), 9-102 (Burger)	
BOWLING: Salman Mirza 4-0-14-3 (1w), Naseem 4-0-28-2 (1w, 1nb), Nawaz 4-0-19-0, Abrar 4-0-26-1, Faheem 3.2-0-23-4	
PAKISTAN:	
Sahibzada Farhan lbw b Bosch	28
Saim Ayub not out	71
Babar Azam not out	11
EXTRAS (W-2)	2
TOTAL (for one wicket, 13.1 overs)	112
DID NOT BAT: Salman Ali Agha, Usman Khan, Hasan Nawaz, Mohammad Nawaz, Faheem Ashraf, Naseem Shah, Salman Mirza, Abrar Ahmed	
FALL OF WICKET: 1-54 (Sahibzada)	
BOWLING: Burger 2-0-14-0 (1w), Ngidi 2-0-14-0 (1w), Bosch 2-0-17-1, Baartman 2-0-34-0, Ferreira 3.1-0-22-0, Linde 2-0-11-0	
RESULT: Pakistan won by nine wickets.	
PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH: Salman Mirza	



CHITTAGONG: West Indies skipper Roston Chase attempts a reverse sweep as Bangladesh captain Litton Das watches during the third T20 International at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium on Friday. West Indies won by five wickets. Ackeem Auguste (50) and Chase (50) helped the visitors complete a 3-0 sweep. Earlier, Romario Shepherd (3-36) took a hat-trick as Bangladesh were bowled out for 151 after opting to bat. Tanzid Hasan top-scored for the hosts with 89.—AFP

Rashid, Zadran lead Afghanistan to T20 series win over Zimbabwe

HARARE: Spinner Rashid Khan and batter Ibrahim Zadran starred as Afghanistan beat Zimbabwe by seven wickets on Friday to clinch a three-match Twenty20 International series with a game to spare.

Zimbabwe won the toss, batted and were all out for 125 at the Harare Sports Club. Afghanistan then reached 129-3 with 12 balls remaining.

After suffering a heavy loss in a one-off Test, the tourists had won the first T20 by 53 runs on Wednesday. The dead rubber T20 will be played on Sunday.

Rashid took 3-9, including the wicket of rival captain Sikandar Raza, who top-scored for Zimbabwe with 37 off 32 balls, including four fours.

Raza was caught and bowled as he struggled to deal with a delivery aimed at off stump, striking the ball straight to the 27-year-old Afghan skipper.

Rashid struck again three balls later in the 16th over, as his googly led to Tashinga Musekiwa (13) being caught by Mohammad Nabi at long on.

The 24-run sixth-wicket partnership of Raza and Musekiwa was the best for Zimbabwe, who struggled after the failures of top-order pair Dion Myers (six) and Brendan Taylor (three).

Brad Evans (12) was Rashid's other victim, trapped leg before as he attempted a sweep with Zimbabwe desperately seeking runs late in the innings.

For the second straight T20, Zadran top scored for Afghanistan, hitting an unbeaten 57 for his 12th T20 half-century after 52 runs on Wednesday. His 51-ball stand included seven fours.

It was left to fourth-wicket partner Azmatullah Omarzai to hit the match and series-winning four past long off.—AFP

Cameron vacates WBC title in protest against rules for women

LONDON: Chantelle Cameron relinquished her WBC super lightweight title on Friday in a bold protest over women's boxing rules, with the British fighter demanding the right to fight three-minute rounds like her male counterparts.

Cameron's decision to vacate her championship belt stems from her opposition to the World Boxing Council's mandate that women compete in two-minute rounds, which the 34-year-old views as unequal treatment.

"Women's boxing has come a long way, but there's still progress to be made," Cameron said in a statement. "I've always believed in equality and that includes the choice to fight equal rounds, equal opportunities, and equal respect."

Cameron was upgraded to WBC super-lightweight world champion when Katie Taylor was designated 'Champion in Recess' as she stepped away from boxing.

The WBC was set to have a purse bid on Friday for a fight between Cameron and fellow British boxer Sandy Ryan.

In 2023, Amanda Serrano also relinquished her WBC title after they refused to allow her to compete in bouts under the same rule-set as men's boxing, with 12 three-minute rounds.—Reuters

Pakistan will start doing better next year, vows Aaqib

By Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Pakistan's national cricket team is undergoing a significant transition and a marked improvement in performance should be visible within the next year, selector and PCB Director of High Performance AAaqib Javed said on Friday.

Speaking to journalists at the Police Headquarters ground after visiting Hyderabad's Niaz Stadium, AAaqib addressed the team's recent inconsistent results, attributing part of the challenge to a long-term lack of competitive cricket and infrastructure development at home.

"I think it depends on the era when you are playing against other competitive side and I think after 2000 or 2010 a rapid change is witnessed in the game of cricket with some teams becoming professionals and some took their professionalism to the next level," AAaqib remarked.

He explained that Pakistan's stadiums were devoid of international cricket for 12-15 years, which stunted the necessary growth of cricket infrastructure.

"When you players don't have grounds to play and academies to learn then temporarily you don't feel the difference or you feel that things are heading in the right direction. But when your pipeline [of producing cricketers] becomes empty the gaps start emerging," he said.

Despite these historical gaps, AAaqib expressed optimism, pointing to promising youngsters and ongoing infrastructure projects.

"Positive side is that we are seeing hope in youngsters. Even two players Salman and Saad Khan from Hyderabad will hopefully be playing for the national side," he disclosed, describing the current phase as a "shift" in national cricket.

"This is a shift and it can take time. I don't say it will take five years' time but in next one year you will find improvement," Aaqib promised.

The former pacer, who famously took 4/29 against a Sachin Tendulkar-led India at the same Niaz Stadium in 1997, defended the recent team performance under T20 captain Salman Ali Agha.

He noted that Pakistan qualified for the final of the Asia Cup and "gave a tough time to India with a tremendous fight."

He also highlighted a Test victory against South Africa, noting the second Test was lost after Pakistan had a good chance to win.

"It's not been too long that Salman is at the helm. You don't achieve all the things you aspire to in two to three months. I am satisfied with the Asian Cup and the performance which we lost after a close fight," he said, adding that Pakistan has won four of its last six Tests.

Aaqib defended the strategy of preparing spin-friendly pitches for home Test series.

"You always look how to win the Test match or any other strategy can help win you matches. Every home side takes advantage of home ground therefore we should also do the same".

When asked about India's current dominance compared to the 70s-90s period when Pakistan often prevailed, he conceded that India had done "labourious work" in their cricket.

"But Pakistan was not able to focus development of game in last 14-15 years. The beginning has been made now and we will compete again," he stated.

Aaqib emphasised that the focus is now on reviving grassroots cricket, which is why he is visiting centers like Quetta, Hyderabad and Peshawar.

"Right from seniors to youngsters falling in the U-15 to U-17 categories everyone needs an enabling cricket environment to produce quality cricketers," he said, warning that without this focus, "the pipeline of producing cricketers becomes weaker."

During his visit, Aaqib met Hyderabad Mayor Kashif Shoro, who proposed handing over the stadium to the PCB for hosting PSL matches and ODIs.

Aaqib said he was glad to see the stadium's condition and noted that "first class matches can be played in Niaz Stadium."

However, for international PSL and ODI games, certain standards must be met.

"I am told that the Hyderabad leadership is building a hostel. Practice area needs to be developed here. The dressing room has some standards so we will share requirements and proposals so that the stadium was able to host PSL and ODI," he said.